

Message Text

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11
ACTION NEA-10

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R 150530Z MAY GIH
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 709
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
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CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EGMO. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT,; PINS, PFOR, BG, IN
SUBJECT: ADMIRAL KHAN DEFENDS FARAKKA MARCH

REF: A. DACCA 2502, B. NW DELHI 7205

1. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY (MAY 14), DCMLA REAR ADMIRAL M.HGMV KHAN REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT THE INDIAN STATEMENT OF WARNING ON THE PROPOSED MARCH TO PROTEST THE UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL OF GANGES WATER. ACCORDING TO DACCA NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS,

KHAN SAID THE "WARNING RUNS COUNTER TO THE DECLARED INDIAN POLICY OF SEEKING A SOLUTION TO THE RIVER PROBLEM AMICABLY." HE REPORTEDLY ADDED THAT THE STATEMENT ON WARNING BROUGHT BASELESS CHARGES AND ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT. KHAN ASSERTED THAT OANGLADESH IS AN INDEPENDENT AND SOVEREIGN NATION, AND ITS PEOPLE HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO PROTEST WITHIN ITS TERRITORY AGAINST ANY ACTION OY ANOTHER COUNTRY THAT JEOPARDISES ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS. REGARDING THE PROPOSED MARCH, KHAN REPORTEDLY SAID THAT

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HE UNDERSTOOD THE MARCH WOULD BE PEACEFUL AND IT WOULD ONLY

REFLECT THE SENTIMENT OF THE PEOPLE ON THEIR SOVEREIGN RIGHTS. KHAN DENIED THAT THERE WAS ANY PROVOCATION FROM THE BANGLADESH SIDE; BANGLADESH DID NOT BELIEVE IN PROPAGANDIZING ON THE FARAKKA ISSUE, HE REPORTEDLY SAID, AND SIMPLY GAVE OUT THE FACTS OF THE SITUATION.

2. IN THE REST OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE, KHAN APPARENTLY RESTATED AT LENGTH THE BDG POSITION ON FARAKKA, REVIEWED AGAIN THE BARRAGE'S ADVERSE EFFECTS ON BANGLADESH, AND URGED INDIA TO RECIPROCATE BANGLADESH'S EARNEST DESIRE FOR A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION. HE COMPLAINED THAT THE BDG STILL DOES NOT KNOW THE ACTUAL AMOUNT OF WATER INDIA HAS WITHDRAWN THROUGH FARAKKA. HE ALSO MENTIONED THAT THE REPORTED INDIAN PLAN TO CONSTRUCT A BARRAGE OVER THE

HANANDA AND TO DIVERT THE WATERS OF THE BRAHMAPUTRA WOULD BE A VIOLATION OF THE CODE OF INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE REGARDING THE

RIGHTS OF RIPARIAN STATES. AT ONE POINT IN THE INTERVIEW WHEN DISCUSSING THE WILLINGNESS OF THE PEOPLE TO SACRIFICE IN ORDER TO UPHOLD THEIR INDEPENDENCE, KHAN REPORTEDLY CHARACTERIZED BANGLADESH AS THE SECOND LARGEST MUSLIM COUNTRY WITH A POPULATION OF 80 MILLION.

3. IN ADDITION TO EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF KHAN'S REMARKS, DACCAN NEWSPAPERS TODAY CARRY CONDEMNATIONS OF THE INDIAN STATEMENT BY

MAULANA BHASHANI AND OTHER ORGANIZERS OF THE MARCH AND NUMEROUS STORIES ON PREPARATIONS FOR THE MARCH. WHILE KHAN'S REMARKS CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT THE MARCH WOULD BE LIMITED TO BANGLADESH

SOIL (THE TV VERSION ATTRIBUTED TO HIM THE STATEMENT "WITHIN THE BORDERS"), THE BANGLADESH TIMES REPORTS THAT THE MARCHERS PLAN TO REACH TELKUPI IN MONOKASHA UNION, ABOUT A MILE FROM THE BORDER, ON MAY 17 "WITH THE AIM OF EVENTUALLY REACHING FARAKKA BARRAGE AT ABOUT 4 P.M. THE SAME DAY." BOSTER

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